Vol. VIII. Numb. 72

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the Repreſentation of the Juſtices of Peace of Middleſex *and* Weſtminſter, *as to the Cauſe of the exceſſive Price of Corn and Bread, and the puniſhing of Ingroſſers, Regrators, and Foreſtallers. On ſetting the Poor at Work, relieving and employing poor impriſon'd Debtors, and puniſhing Vagabonds; with ſome Account of the Laws relating to that Subject.*

From **Wednesday**, October 5. to **Saturday**, October 8. 1709.

Obſ. WELL, *Roger*, now I muſt take you Country men to Task a little; for I find, that ſeveral of you Farmers are guilty of grinding the Faces of the Poor in raiſing the Price of Corn ſo high, by forbearing to bring Corn to Market, and ſelling by Samples, which keeps the Markets from being furniſh'd, as the Juſtices of Peace of the County of *Middleſex*, and the City and Liberty of *Weſtminſter*, have repreſented to the Lords and others of her Majeſty's moſt honourable Privy-Council. I am ſorry to find, *Roger*, that you Country Farmers ſhould be guilty of ſuch Practices, and fall in with Ingroſſers, Regraters, and Foreſtallers, to oppreſs the Poor, whoſe Cries reach Heaven for Want of Bread and Work.

Country-m. I can aſſure you, Maſter, your honeſt *Roger* is not concern'd in ſuch wicked and oppreſſive Practices. I have ſent all my Corn to Market, but what was abſolutely neceſſary for Seed, and the Suſtenance of my Family. I would not have the Curſes of the Poor upon me, for all the Money that any of my Neighbours get by ſuch abominable Ways and Means. Nay, I am ſo far from falling in with that vile Sort of Men our Juſtices complain of, that I adviſ'd our Parſon t'other Day to preach upon that Text, *Prov.* 11. 26. *He that with-holdeth Corn, the People ſhall curſe him; but a Bleſſing ſhall be upon the Head of him that ſelleth it.* I hope my Lords the Biſhops, Maſter, will order all their Clergy to preach upon this, or ſuch like Subjects, and lay the Miſchief of ſuch Practices ſo open to thoſe Hoarders, Regraters, Ingroſſers, and Foreſtallers, that if they have nothing of the Fear of God to make them refrain, they may be ſham'd out of ſuch Practices by the Cries of the Poor, and the Reproaches of their Neighbours. Thoſe of the Clergy that keep ſilent at ſuch a Time as this, I take to be liable to the Curſe, as well as thoſe that with-hold the Corn; for 'tis their Duty to tell the People of their Faults, eſpecially of ſuch a crying Oppreſſion as this.

Obſ. You ſay very well, *Roger*. I hope alſo, that the Juſtices of Peace in other Parts of the Kingdom, will follow the good Example of thoſe of *Middleſex* and *Weſtminſter*, and take Care to puniſh Ingroſſers, Foreſtallers, and Regraters, and Bakers who don't ſell according to the juſt Aſſize. If the Juſtices examine every where into the Barns, Corn-Yards, and Granaries, I doubt not but it would be a very effectual Way to lower the Price of Corn: And for what Defects there may be in our Laws to prevent ſuch Practices, and particularly the Exportation of Corn, when it comes to ſuch and ſuch a Rate, we have no Reaſon to doubt, but the Parliament will provide for it, when they meet, if the Matter be duly laid before them; which I hope ſome good Patriots will take Care to do, and not ſuffer our Poor to ſtarve in the Midſt of Plenty, and our People to decreaſe by Want at Home, while ſo many of them fall every Year by the Sword Abroad. I hope alſo, *Roger*, that every one who can give Information to the Juſtices of Peace, againſt ſuch who are guilty of thoſe Practices, will do it, that they may be brought to due Puniſhment. Conſidering the Badneſs of the Seaſons, the Cries of our Poor, the Precautions we are oblig'd to take to keep out the Plague, which has ravag'd *Poland*, and other Places of the *North* ſo dreadfully, and contributes ſo much to raiſe the Price of Corn, becauſe it cannot be with Safety brought from the noble Granaries of *Dantzick*, as formerly. 'Tis my humble Opinion, *Roger*, that a general Faſt ſhould be appointed, according to the Advice of the Prophet *Joel* in the like Caſe, *when the Land mourn'd becauſe the Corn was waſted.* And let the Players and Comedians be as merry as they pleaſe, I cannot but think it a Braving of Heaven, for them to act their Comedies and mock Tragedies, when the Judgments of God are upon the World, and has fill'd it with real Tragedies.

Country-m. I think it fit you ſhould take this Opportunity, Maſter, to ſay ſomething to us concerning our Poor, ſo many of whom are ſtarving for Want of Work.

Obſ. We have good Laws already for that End, *Roger*: which I hope the Juſtices will, in this Time of Dearth, take Care to put in Execution, until ſuch Time as better Laws can be provided.

Country-m. Pray, Maſter, give me ſome Account of theſe Laws, that I may put our Juſtices in Mind of them; for it grieves me to ſee ſo many poor People in Want of Work at ſuch a Time as this, when if they had it, all that they could earn would ſcarce be able to buy them Bread: and how much more deplorable is their Caſe, when they have no Work at all? I dread the Conſequences of it, Maſter. We have lately heard of ſeveral inhuman Murders by Foot-Pads, and of ſeveral Attempts to break open Houſes, of which I am afraid we ſhall full have more tragical Compliments, if Care be not taken to employ our Poor, and to force idle Vagabonds to work. The Decay of Trade is ſuch every where, Maſter, that abundance of People and Families who uſed to be employ'd that Way, are now turn'd off, becauſe thoſe who employ'd them have no Vent for their Commodities.

Obſ. I am ſenſible there's too much Truth in what you ſay, *Roger*, but hope when our Parliament meets, they will take the State of our Trade into Conſideration, conſult with our Merchants and Traders on proper Methods to advance it, and enquire into the Cauſes why our Money ſtagnates, in order to remove, as much as poſſible, all thoſe Things which hinder its Circulation. The Affairs of the War muſt be minded; but that does not ſay, the Affairs of our Trade, which ſupports it, muſt be neglected. If that be not better provided for, than hitherto, according to the laudable Example of our Neighbours the *Dutch*, 'tis ten to one but it may take another Channel, be in a great Meaſure loſt to us, and not only put us out of a Condition to maintain or employ our Poor, but increaſe their Numbers. In the mean Time, *Roger*, I ſhall give you ſome Account of what has been enjoin'd by our Laws for employing the Poor, that the Juſtices of Peace, and other public ſpirited Men, who have a Mind to promote ſo good a Work, may be prompted to ſet it forward in Earneſt.

In the firſt Place, *Roger*, 'tis proper to take Notice of the Cauſes aſſign'd for the Increaſe of the

Poor

Poor in the 14th of *Car.* 2. Cap. 12. *Eliz.* ſome Defects of the Laws concerning the ſetting of 'em, and for Want of a due Proviſion of the Regulations of Relief and Employment in ſuch Pariſhes or Places where they are legally ſettl'd; which forces many to turn incorrigible Rogues, and others to periſh for Want. Now, *Roger*, ſince there are ſtill Complaints of Defects in our Laws about that Matter, 'tis hop'd the Parliament at next Meeting will take Care of it. In the mean Time, *Roger*, I ſhall give you ſome Account of what our Legiſlature has formerly done in this Affair. The 3d of *Car.* 1. Cap. 4. impowers the Church-wardens and Overſeers of the Poor, with the Conſent of two or more Juſtices of the Peace, whereof one to be of the *Quorum* within their reſpective Limits, if there be more Juſtices than one; but if there be no more than one, with the Aſſent of that Juſtice, to ſet up, uſe, and occupy any Trade, Myſtery, or Occupation, only for the ſetting on Work, and better Relief of the Poor of the Pariſh Town or Place, of or within which they ſhall be Church-wardens or Overſeers of the Poor, any former Statute to the contrary notwithſtanding.

Then by the 42d of *Eliz.* Cap. 2. which was enlarg'd by the 14th of *Car.* 2. Cap. 12. Church-wardens and Overſeers were impower'd, with the Conſent of one or two Juſtices of the Peace in every County, whereof one to be of the *Quorum*, to lay a Tax upon every Pariſhioner, to raiſe a convenient Stock of Flax, Hemp, Wooll, Thread, Iron, and other Ware and Stuff to ſet the Poor at Work, and alſo competent Sums of Money towards the neceſſary Relief of the lame, impotent, old, blind, and ſuch other among 'em being poor, and not able to work, and for the putting out the Children of the Poor to be 'Prentices. They were alſo impower'd by the ſame Statute, where any Pariſh was not able to maintain their own Poor, to tax any other Pariſh or Pariſhes, in the ſame Hundred; or if the Hundred were not able, the Juſtices, at their General Quarter-Seſſions, were impower'd to tax any other Pariſhes within the County, for that End. The Church-wardens, and Overſeers, were alſo impower'd with Conſent of the Lord of the Mannor, to build Houſes, or Cottages, upon Waſtes, for the Poor to dwell in; and to prevent the near Relations of rich People from becoming a Burden to Pariſhes, the Juſtices of Peace were by the ſame Act impower'd to oblige the Father, and Grand-father, the Mother, and Grand-mother, and the Children of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent Perſon, or other poor Perſon not able to work, being of a ſufficient Ability, at their own Charges, to relieve and maintain every ſuch poor Perſon in that Manner, and according to that Rate, as by the ſaid Juſtices, or the Majority of them, ſhould, at their General Quarter-Seſſions, be aſſeſs'd, upon Pain that every one of them ſhould forfeit twenty Shillings every Month which they fail therein.

Country-m. Had thoſe good Laws been duly put in Execution, Maſter, the Nation would not have been burden'd with ſuch a Number of Poor, nor peſter'd by ſuch Flocks of Vagabonds as at preſent. If the Juſtices of Peace, Church-wardens, and Conſtables don't take Care to enquire after thoſe Vagabonds, and ſturdy Beggars, and ſend them to Work-Houſes, or Houſes of Correction, if they refuſe to work, I dread the Conſequences of it this Winter. I hope the Murders and Burglaries already committed, will be a Motive for putting the Laws in Execution, to ſet the Poor at Work, and to puniſh Vagabonds with more Care than hitherto.

Obſ. I am of Opinion, *Roger*, that thoſe, and the other Laws relating to the Poor, ought to be conſider'd, and their Defects enquir'd into; and, for my own Part, can ſee no Reaſon why Brothers and Siſters ſhould not, if capable, be under the ſame Obligation with Parents and Children, to relieve and maintain their poor Brothers and Siſters, if the Parents be not able to do it, in ſuch manner as the Juſtices, at their General Quarter-Seſſions, ſhall agree upon; and why the Laws for Relief of poor Priſoners for Debt, and ſetting 'em at work, ſhould not alſo be enquir'd into, and their Defects ſupply'd, ſince there are ſuch grievous Complaints of their barbarous Uſage by Creditors and Goalers. The above-mention'd Statute of the 42d of *Eliz.* has laid a good Foundation for the Relief of poor impriſon'd Debtors in every County; which is improv'd by the 19th of *Car.* 2. *Cap* 4. to raiſe Stocks for employing them in the ſame manner as for employing the Poor of Pariſhes. But more of thoſe Things, and the Objections that may be againſt them, another Time, *Roger*.

Advertiſements.

Juſt publiſh'd,

☞ Mrs. Frances Shafto's Narrative, containing an Account of her being in Sir Theophilus Oglethorp's Family, where hearing many treaſonable Things, and among others, that the pretended Prince of Wales was Sir Theophilus's Son, ſhe was trick'd into France by Sir Theophilus's Daughter, and barbarouſly us'd, to make her turn Proteſtant Nun, in order to prevent a Diſcovery, but at laſt made her Eſcape to Switzerland, and from thence arriv'd in England in December 1706. Price 6d. Sold by B. Bragge in Pater-Noſter-Row.

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☞ The Scourge of Venus and Mercury, repreſented in a Treatiſe of the Venereal Diſeaſe; together with an Appendix in anſwer to Mr. John Marten's Reflexions thereupon. By J. Simelaer, Practitioner in Phyſick, and Author of the Royal Decoction. Price of the Appendix alone bound 6d, together 3s. 6d. Sold by J. Helms in Weſtminſter-hall, J. Gofling at the Mitre in Fleet-ſtreet, W. Carter at the Green Dragon in St. Paul's Church-yard, J. Phillips at the black Bull in Cornhill, H. Ribotteau at the Crown near Cecil-ſtreet in the Strand, B. Picard at the 3 Bibles in the Minories, J. Harding in St. Martins-lane near Long-acre, J. Morphew near Stationers-hall, and by the Author at his Dwelling-houſe (late the Duke of Leeds's) in high Holborn, over against little Turn-ſtile.

☞ Juſt publiſh'd, ☜

QUACKERY UNMASK'D, being a rational and effectual Anſwer to Mr. Marten's Treatiſe of the Venereal Diſeaſe, its Appendix, (for publiſhing which, as appears by the Gazette of the 30th of July, he now ſtands indicted) and the charitable Surgeon. Sold (Price 18d) by D. Brown without Temple-Bar, G. Strahan in Cornhill, J. Woodward in St. Chriſtopher's Church-yard, B. Barker in Weſtminſter-hall Booſellers; and by the Author, Dr. Spinke, at his Houſe, the Golden Ball in the dark Paſſage, three Doors beyond the Sun Tavern in Honey-Lane Market, Cheapſide. Where alſo may be had, ☞ ANTIVENEREAL-PILLS, &c. (the moſt powerful Medicines for that Diſeaſe yet known) Price 3s. the Box, with Directions.

☞ Gentlemen, who have any Thing to communicate to the Author of this Paper, are deſir'd to direct it to be left with B. Bragge in Pater-Noſter-Row, or H. Meere, Printer, at the Black-Fryar in Black-Fryars, for the Obſervator. Poſt paid. Where Advertiſements are taken in.

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